

August 2011

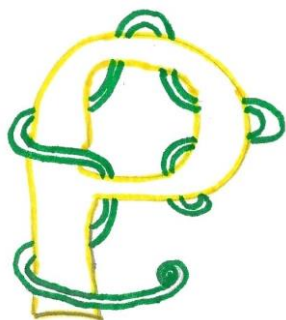
(Volume 36)





August 2011 (Volume 36)





Perhaps one of those times in UK history that we are not proud to have lived through. The mindless looting, destruction of property with absolutely no respect for danger to people living above the torched premises. Images went round the world of senseless violence and a total disregard for anything except personal gain. For trainers...for plasma tv sets....for Ipods and for mobile phones. No justification that hunger was the cause. Food was never targeted. It was not any particular ethnic group and was carried out by variety of ages - some perpetrators were very young. No respect for people, for communities and above all...no self respect. Listening to endless comments on phone-ins and on tv one slowly realises that there is a mindless underclass with no morals, no education, no family life and no aspirations. Without these fundamentals it is futile to endeavour to rectify the problem and more importantly these feral youngsters breed and produce another generation with even less purpose/ambition (if that is possible). What, after all is less than zero. I listened to all schools of thoughts on the problem and heard no sensible easy answer. From 'bring in the troops' to 'prison sentences that bring tears to their eyes' From 'depriving them of council rented accommodation' to 'tagging' and 'flogging' These are punishments and totally inadequate and pander to our desire to seek revenge. The problem is far deeper. It stems from early environment, from lack of a family life and home discipline, standards and example from elders and their environment. The success of this 'back to basics' is evident in any community where *family* is important and is not exhibited in any particular social strata or ethnic group. It seems to me that the loss of this ingredient in life manifests itself in this previously unknown behaviour. Fine, identifying the problem is easy and obvious (to me anyway), solving it is more difficult and by its very nature is a long-term requirement. If it is not faced we will perpetuate the problem and in doing so future generations will spiral downward to a position of no return and economically the country will implode....

The family is the key.

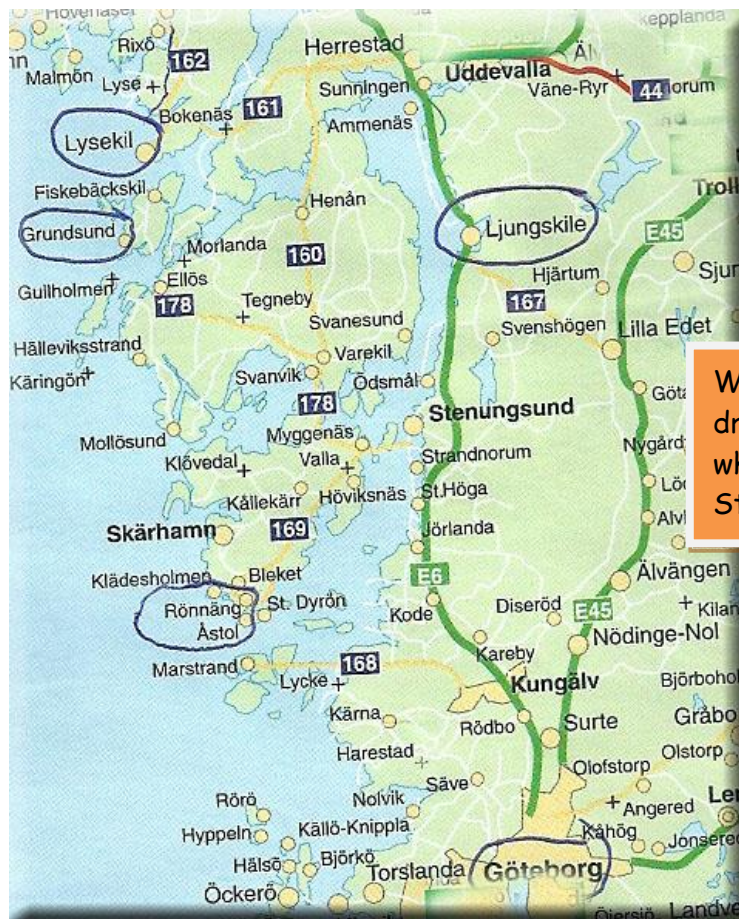
No pandering to 'single families. Old fashioned standards and discipline must be encouraged. This has to be a multi-pronged attack and no prisoners can be taken It has to be a hard change of attitudes and the liberal free thinking must be shown to be totally out of touch with reality in the streets. It can be done.....it must be done, but it will take time, and it will not be popular, but the alternatives do not bear thinking about. I won't be here to see the result but I would like it to be positive for my descendants...Enough of my pontificating...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Raph'.

August 2011



In August we took a weeks break in Sweden, flying to Gothenburg (Goteborg) from Heathrow



We picked up a Volkswagen Golf and drove north (about 70 miles) to Lysekil where we stayed in a quirky hotel called Strandflickorna (Beachgirls).

The room was small but fun and the staff were great. It was situated on a rocky headland and behind the hotel were rocks with a windy path and seats leading to a small sheltered area with seats overlooking the harbour and sea



The dining room was eclectic and the buffet breakfast was really good.



The quirky dining room

We ate in a floating fish restaurant (Praman) the first night and enjoyed a great fish soup with saffron and crème fraise. The waiter recommended a ferry trip across to Grundsund for the following day



Some of the attractive houses and harbour of Lysekil seemed especially bright and colourful in the clean unpolluted air

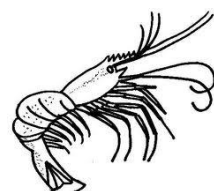




The ferry trip across the short expanse of water shortened a lengthy circuitous road route and was free for cars and passengers and was so relaxing...

We found the roads and small towns so quiet and absolutely beautiful.

Armed with fresh prawns from the fish-market together with a disposable bbq and fruit we drove along tree-lined small roads seeking a small unspoilt cove. We found it! The food in this clean peaceful spot tasted wonderful and will remain with us as a special time...





We went for a coffee break to the port at Grunsund and the fishing cottages and boats moored alongside the jetties were colourful and seemingly void of any people. August is the end of the season so possibly it had been busier up to that time.

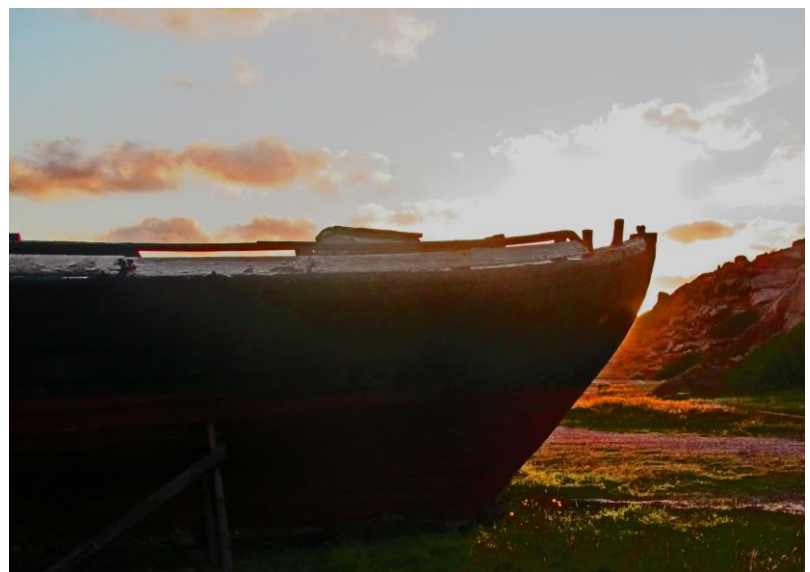


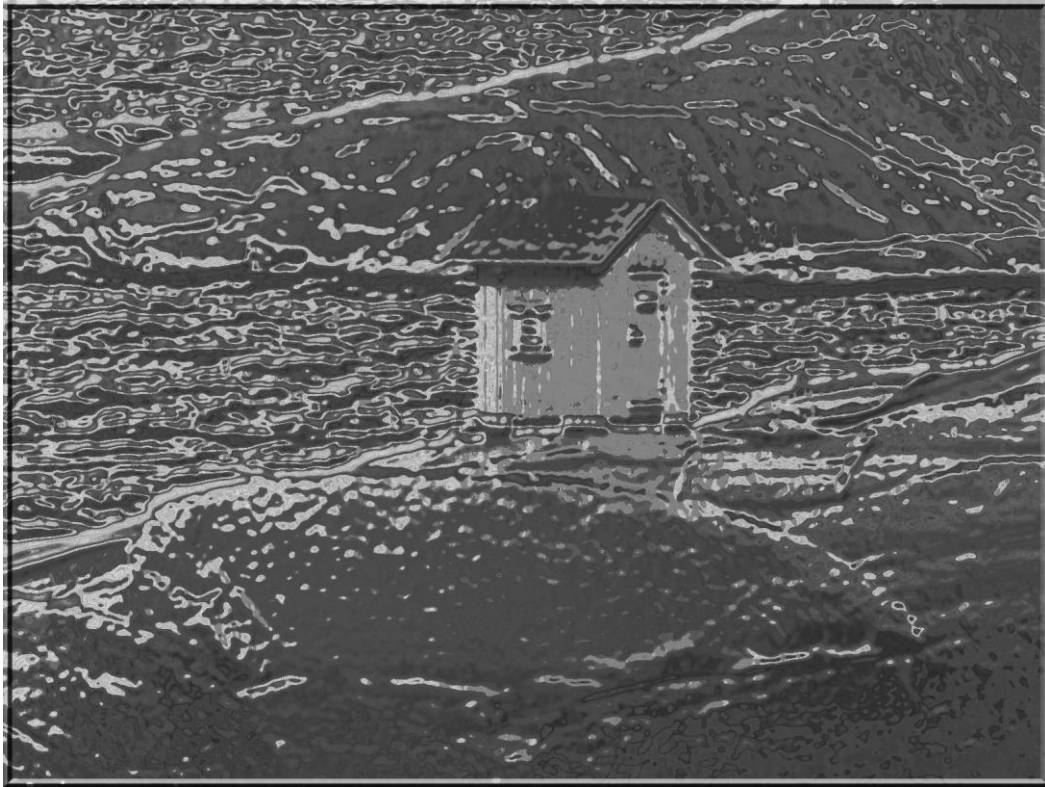


Nearly all the houses are painted in the protective red colour and all seemed in pristine condition



When we got back to Lysekil we had a herring platter served in the rocky garden and just before sunset we ran to the rocky peninsular nature reserve to witness the best sunset we have ever seen. Totally surrounded by rocks, overlooking the sea the sun set and afforded us an ever-changing vista. We ran past this old Swedish wooden boat with the golden rays silhouetting it. These pictures hopefully capture some of the wonder of that evening....

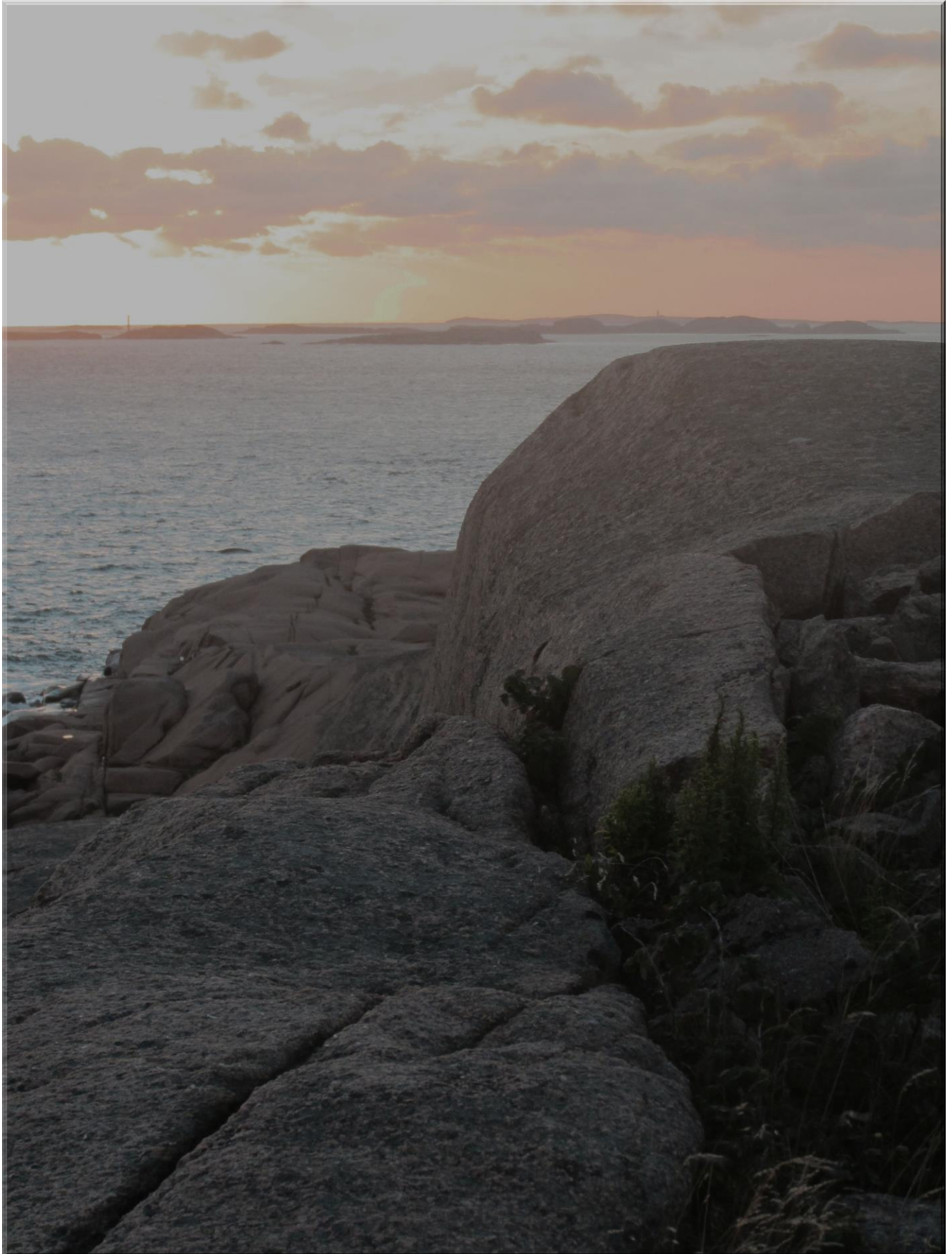




The beach hut stood in the distance on the rocks and provided the only human element (other than an occasional sailing boat) to the scene









Sorry there are so many but it was difficult to choose the best so..hey it's my book...so I included the lot...

!!!!





A local boat in the harbour



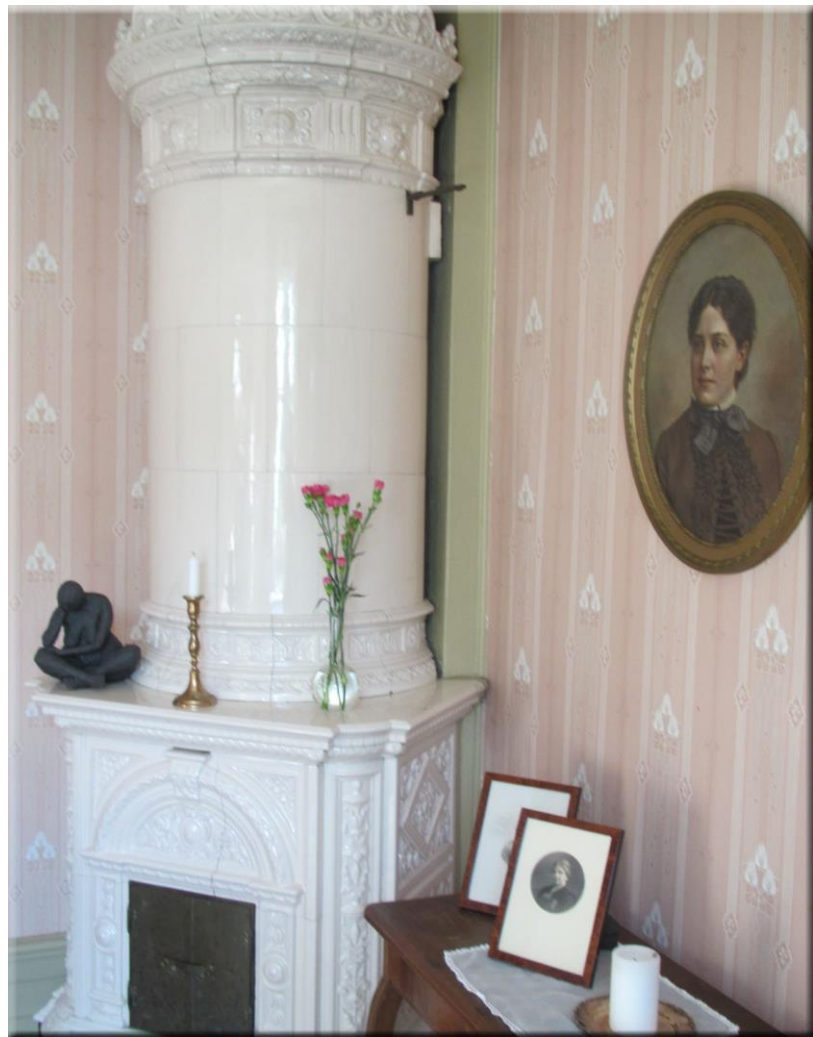
Lynn was totally overcome with sunflower envy ...(see arrow)





We left Lysekil after two great nights and drove down the coast to Villa Sjotorp at Ljungskile which took us about an hour. The drive was easy and the villa was originally a private summer residence around 1900. The bedrooms were grand and the dining room, terrace and garden overlooked a view down onto the sea and islands that was breath-taking.



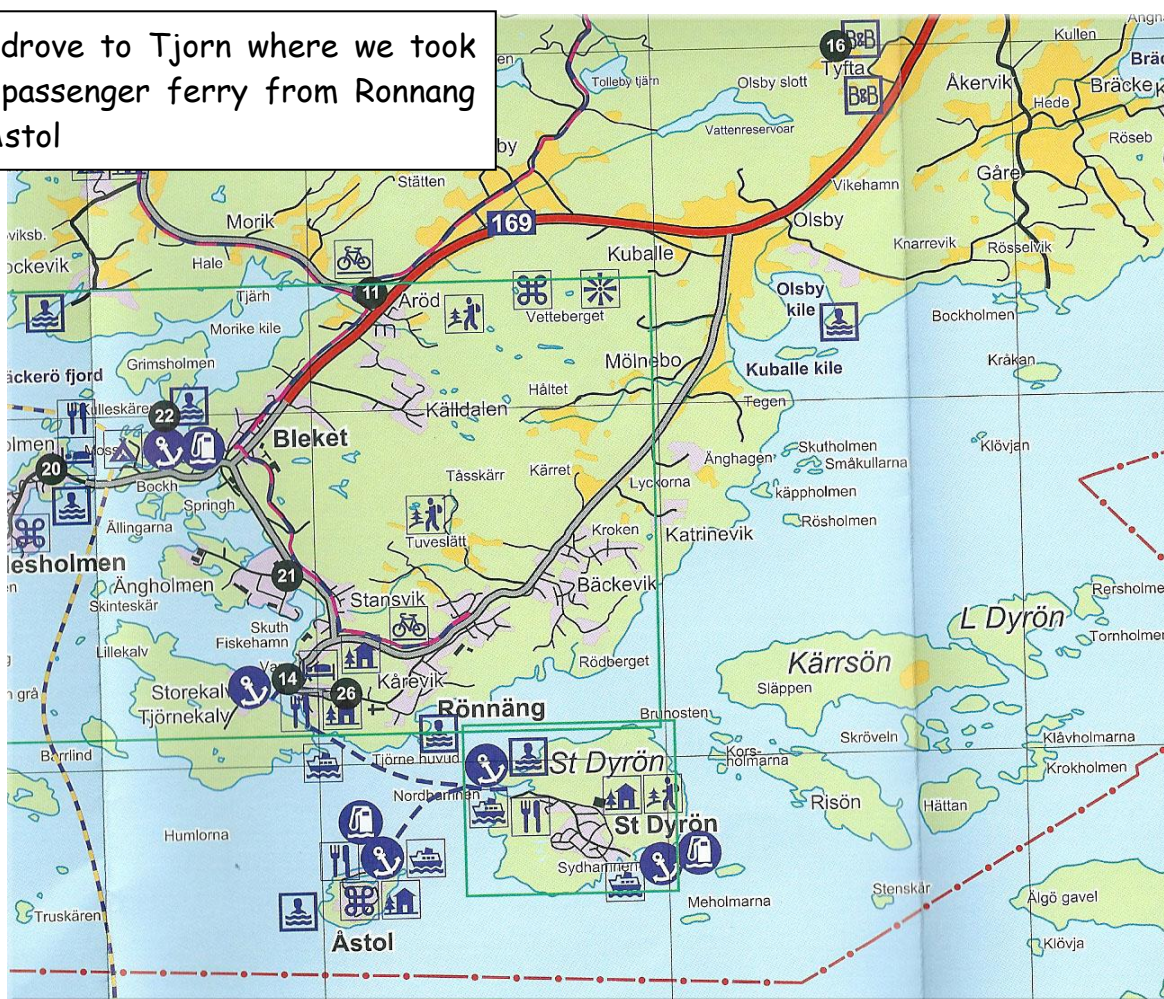


The Villa was full of unusual and traditional artefacts and the stoves in all rooms were fantastic





We drove to Tjorn where we took the passenger ferry from Ronnang To Astol





When we arrived at Ronnang the tiny ferry was in and they waited for us while we parked and quickly boarded. At the tiny island of Astol we had a coffee in a small café overlooking the water and chatted to a young couple. We walked across the beautiful island admiring the red fishing cottages which are largely summer houses for boat owners and fishing enthusiasts from around Sweden. The population of 200 swells to 400 in season which was now ending.

The smokehouse..Astol Rockerie has been converted to a really fantastic restaurant where we had pre-booked lunch..

The ice room is now an attractive restaurant filled with photos and memorabilia from the island.



The service was so friendly and the owner, Pia took Lynn and I on a short tour of the island explaining how the island originally was used for sheep grazing.





This was followed by a 'klondike-type' invasion when the herrings were so plentiful that the water appeared silver and one could almost walk across them to the mainland. When they were overfished the island economy changed and now the boating/sailing haven is a Godsend. Pia and Leif, her husband, showed us the remaining lobster fisherman's cottage and also the old houses and explained how all the men and boys used to leave for long fishing periods and when they returned all the babies seemed to be born at the same time





Astol is a very tranquil
and relaxing island





Pia and Leif (Pia@astolsrokeri.se) and (leif@astolsrokeri.se)



All the small notices were from various fishing ports around the world, including Hull and Grimsby...where the fisherman used to go for long fishing trips



When we returned to the Villa Sjotorp we relaxed in the beautiful garden and then descended the steep path to the beach below and enjoyed a swim in the warm clear water





Walking around the lake by the villa was so refreshing and we came to a point where some kids were enjoying pulling a sea platform by a landing stage and this picture encapsulates the peaceful and natural environment that the Swedes seem to keep to themselves.





Another day and another great fish restaurant.....The Salt & Sill. This is a floating hotel, deli, sauna and restaurant. We had pre-booked it from home and again it involved map reading to locate the small herring island of Klädesholmen which was accessed via a bridge this time.



The view of the island as we drove over the bridge was stunning and we walked around the peaceful island enjoying the sunshine and looking forward to our lunch

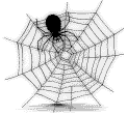


And the island was really interesting with a delightful park overlooking the sea and beautiful homes each with its own mooring and some wonderful boats that were all practical rather than ostentatious



This strange vessel is the Salt & Sill floating sauna capable of quite a speed apparently...





waiting for lunch



As we sat on the restaurant terrace enjoying the great lunch, boats arrived and this passenger obviously had not made a reservation so he sat glumly waiting (in his life jacket)



No caption required

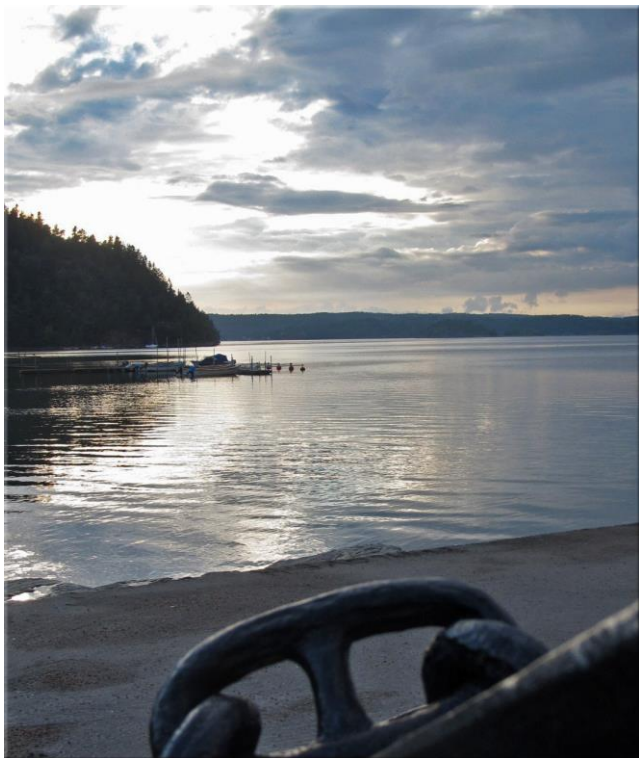


The famous herring platter









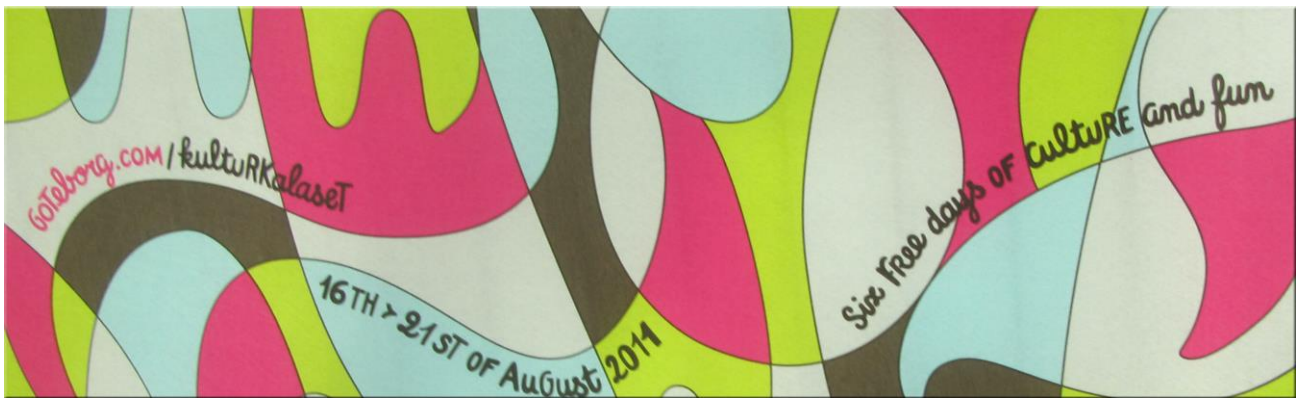






What a perfect place... We left after two wonderful nights heading down the coast to the city of Gothenburg (the second largest in Sweden with $\frac{1}{2}$ million inhabitants and the largest seaport in the Nordic countries).

To our delight our hotel, The Elite, Park Avenue Hotel with its 317 rooms was on Avenyn right in the middle of the week long 'Festival of Culture'. What a contrast and we so enjoyed the city.





Saluhall was a wonderful old market hall full of a great variety of stalls with a multitude of appetising wares beautifully displayed. We lunched at a stall where the locals were eating and the meal was freshly cooked, cheap and fantastic







We saw many of Gothenburg's sights from a Paddan trip on the canals dating back to the 1600's and on into the harbour. We saw the last remaining dry dock shipyard where they pump out the water and nowadays repair ships rather than building them.. One of the canal bridges was so low we all had to rapidly vacate our seats and flatten ourselves on the floor of the boat. No wonder the bridge is called the 'cheese-slicer'

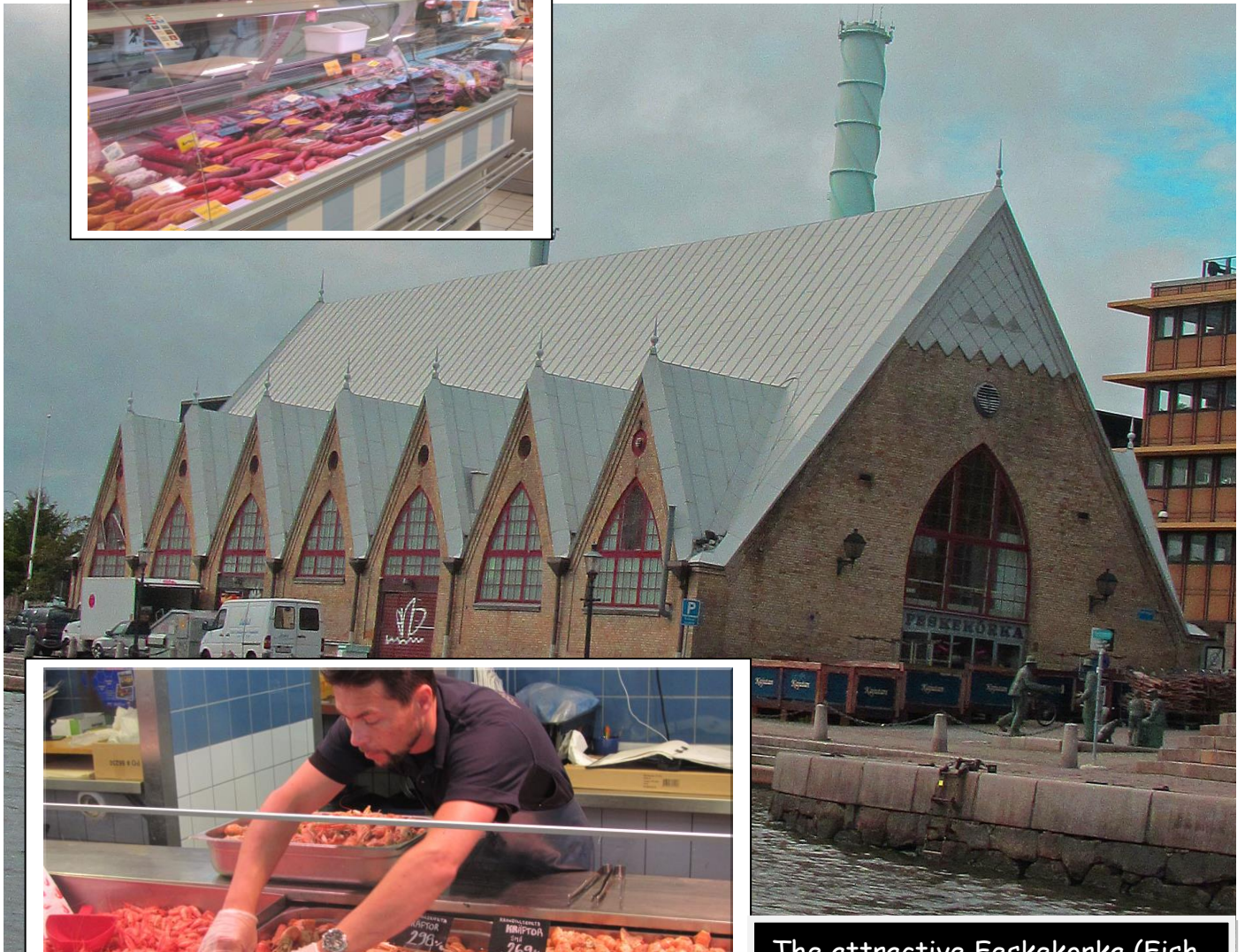




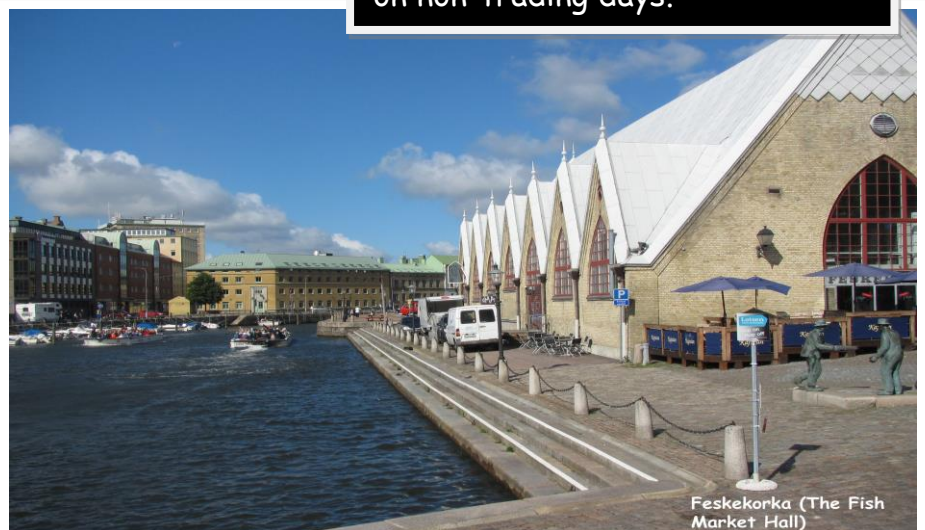
Gothenburg







The attractive Feskekirkja (Fish Church) is the wonderful fish market, so named because of its design.) It is used for weddings on non-trading days.



Feskekirkja (The Fish Market Hall)



Haga is an area in Gothenburg dating back to the 17th century with well-preserved buildings and cobbled streets and second-hand shops, cafes and restaurants.





Maybe it's our warped sense of humour but we were sitting in a square watching these guys patiently inflating this arch and carefully positioning it when we noticed the inscription.

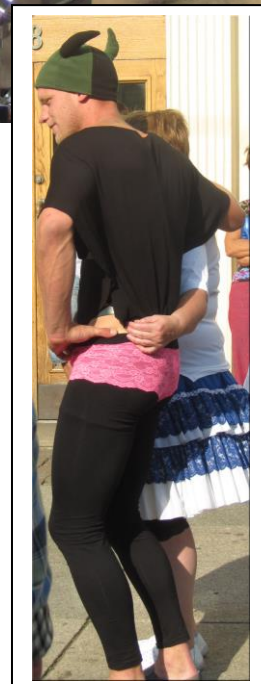
I said "wouldn't it be hilarious if it now fell over" and as if on cue ...that's exactly what it did. Boy did we feel guilty.....when we wiped away the tears of hilarity....

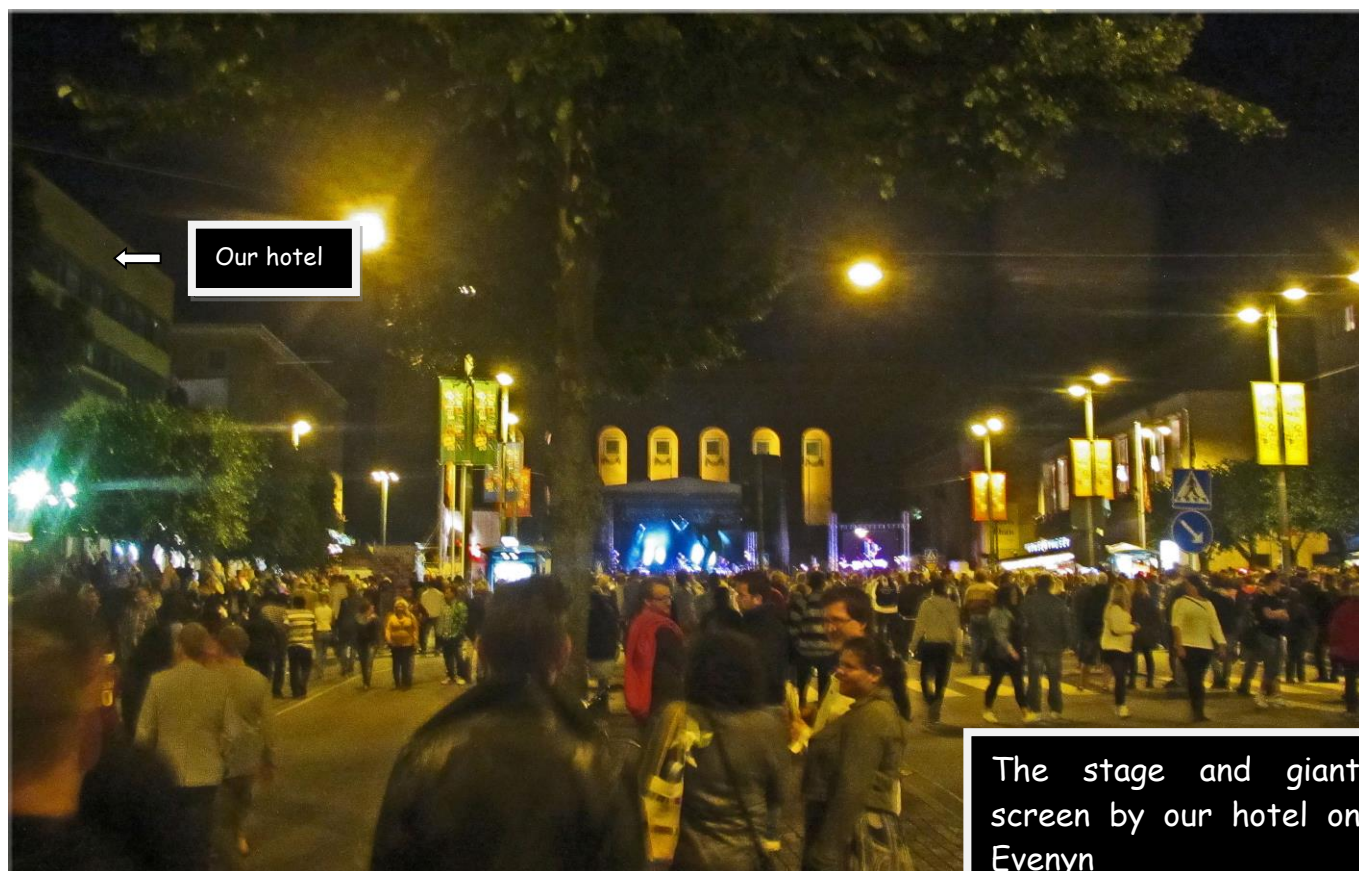


The streets were alive with musicians, dancers and loads of great acts. Everyone was walking from one to another and some of the stage shows with the large screens were really fantastic. Late into the night with some singers accompanied by the state orchestra. We often went to bed and watched it from our seventh floor windows spread out in the streets directly below our hotel.

NOT for the guests seeking a quiet rest.

We specially enjoyed some of the heavy metal groups and took videos of many of the acts.





The stage and giant screen by our hotel on Evenyn



We did not know anything about Sweden and did not get any information prior to going.

It is perceived as a cold and expensive destination but we had some really great weather days (but when it rained...man... did it rain!)

Things were not cheap but on par with London but there were many reasonably-priced meals available. 'The Gothenburg Pass' was great as we used it for entry to the spectacular Universeum with its rainforest and sensational aquarium in a natural setting and return transit to the airport. However as we walked everywhere we probably did not make maximum use of it

We had a fantastic time.....!!!